

## How to Have Confidence Before God

### John 3:19-24

#### #10 in Series, “Absolute Assurance”

1 John 1:6-10 (NKJV) “<sup>6</sup>If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. <sup>7</sup> But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. <sup>8</sup> If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.”

1 John 5:13a (NKJV) “These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life...”

#### Recommended Resources:

*Did You Ever Wish You Could Exchange Your Life?*

*Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart* by J. D. Greear

Kardia☐Heart

#### I. We Come Confidently Before God with an Assured Heart (v 19-21)

##### A. We Refuse a Condemning Heart (v 19-20)

1 John 1:7b (NKJV) “... the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”

If you examine the pattern of your life and that pattern is one of supernatural unexplainable love to those in need (3:17-18), if the pattern of your life is that hatred for another cannot settle down and make itself at home in your heart (3:15), if there is an intolerance of sin so that sin is not the pattern of our life (3:9), if as a pattern of life you love the Father and His values, not the world system and its values and ways (2:15), if you love God’s Word and His commandments and desire to keep them (2:3-5), and if you cannot tolerate sin, but must repent and confess it (1:6-9), then you have evidence that you are “of the truth.”

Romans 8:1a (NKJV) “*There is* therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...”

##### B. We Rejoice in a Confident Heart (v 21)

#### II. We Continue Confident Before God with Answered Prayer (v 22)

James 4:2b (NKJV) “...you do not have because you do not ask.”

Psalms 66:18 (ESV) “If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened.”

#### III. We Are Confident Before God When We Abide in His Presence (v 23-24)

##### A. We Believe on the Son (v 23a)

##### B. We Love One Another (v 23b)

##### C. We Abide in Him and His Spirit Abides in Us (v 24)

*Coram Deo*☐In the presence of God

**How to Have Confidence Before God**  
**1 John 3:19-24**  
**Sermon 10 in the Series – *Absolute Assurance***

Allow me to introduce someone to you that most of you never had the pleasure to meet. Her name was Madge Griffin. Madge was born in 1921 and her accent revealed the fact that she was from Georgia. When Madge moved to this area to live with her daughter Elaine, she was in her 80's. Her daughter attended a very good church of another denomination, but Madge made it clear that she was going to a Baptist church. She visited here and joined in 2004. As long as her health allowed, she was faithful to attend her Lifegroup and Sunday morning worship. After several years, Madge's physical health began to deteriorate and she could no longer attend church. Though her mind was still sharp, she spent most of her days in her daughter's home unable to get out much. I really missed her big smile and encouraging words. One day just a few years ago, Madge's daughter called me and asked if I could come to see Madge. She said that her mother had come to Christ as a 10 year old girl and had struggled with assurance of her salvation most all of her life. Now, in her 90's with a sharp mind but a failing body, Madge knew that she would soon stand before God, but was tormented by doubts about her salvation. I went to see Madge as soon as I could get there.

Madge shared her testimony with me about coming to Christ as a 10 year old, and her testimony was quite clear. She knew that salvation was not earned by good works and understood that as a child. Her life had been lived in faithfulness to the Lord, but there were these doubts as to whether what she had was real, and the word "torment" is not too strong a word to describe what she was going through. Here is what I did. I took the little booklet that we have used in our discipleship training (called TELL) for many years. I went over the 5 tests from 1 John that God has given us to examine our lives to see if the evidence of salvation is there. We went over the sin test in 1 John 1:6-10 (NKJV):

If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.

I explained that *walk* and *confess* are present tense and that speaks of ongoing action, the pattern of our lives. I explained that a true Christian still struggles with sin, but they are miserable because of their sin and are eager to confess it to God – agree with God about their sin. Madge with great enthusiasm and in her deep Georgia accent said, "Pastor, that's me!" I continued with what we call the obedience test from 1 John 2:3-5 that tells us that a Christian longs to obey God and desires to please Him. She responded with, "Pastor, that's me!" I then shared the love test in 1 John 2:15 and told her that this test dealt with the fact that a true Christian loves God's values and not the world's values. Her eyes got bright and she said, "Pastor, that's me!" I moved to the fellowship test in 1 John 2:19. I explained that true Christians desired to be in fellowship with other believers. She said, "That's me; that's me!" I shared the hate test in 1 John 3:14-15. I explained that a true Christian could not hold hatred in their heart against anyone. She responded by saying she certainly passed that test because she hated no one.

After going through this little booklet, and reading the verses in 1 John, Madge said, "Pastor, I am a Christian; I am a Christian!" We rejoiced together and thanked God in prayer for the assurance that He had given her and I started to leave. She said:

Pastor, I am going to die soon, and I am going to be buried in Georgia. I want you to come to Georgia and preach at my funeral, and I want you to share those passages from 1 John. I've got some family that will be there and I don't think some of them would pass those tests and I want them to know Jesus.

I told her that if I possibly could, I would do that. When Madge died a short time later, I was in Kentucky preaching the campus revival at Clear Creek Baptist Bible College and couldn't go to Georgia, so Jim Waddell, our Senior Adult and Pastoral Care Pastor, went to Georgia and preached Madge's funeral and as a part of his message, he shared the 1 John tests.

John tells us that what I have just shared with you is why the Spirit of God inspired him to write this little five chapter book. 1 John 5:13a (NKJV) "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life..." If you are struggling with assurance of salvation because of a condemning heart, I would like to recommend two resources to you. One is the little booklet that I shared with Madge. The other resource is a book that is entitled, *Stop Asking Jesus into Your Heart* by J. D. Greear. Greear, who is now a very influential Pastor in Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, starts the book by saying, "If there were a *Guinness Book of World Records* for 'amount of times having asked Jesus into your heart,' I'm pretty sure I would hold it. By the time I reached the age of eighteen I had probably 'asked Jesus into my heart' five thousand times." [J. D. Greear, *Stop Asking Jesus Into Your Heart*, page 1] Greear goes on to share that he was baptized four times. This book describes what John calls "a condemning heart." The solution to a condemning heart is absolute assurance of salvation.

John is describing a heart that is confident before God (V21). Do you know why many people who profess Christ won't pray or share the Gospel with others? One reason is that when they focus on God in prayer or start to share Christ with others, their heart condemns them. The word "heart" is used in our text four times. The Greek word translated "heart" in the New Testament is *kardia*. A heart specialist is a cardiologist. The word "heart" is used in multiple ways in the Scripture. Let me share from a Greek Lexicon [Zodhiates] what this Greek word *kardia* refers to. This word for heart "is used as a metonym [a word used as a substitute for another] for the mind in general, the understanding, the will, the memory... the conscience, the inner part." The context must guide us in discerning the meaning of "heart" in any passage. I think the word *heart* is used in our text to refer to the whole inner part of a person, especially the mind and the conscience.

The condition of your heart has everything to do with your relationship and your walk with God. When you have an accusing heart, a rebellious heart, a heart containing unforgiveness, a heart that has been defiled in any way, there will be no confidence when you come before God to pray, seek His face, serve Him, or just to worship Him. Whatever your background, every child of God has the birthright to stand in confidence before God and to enjoy Him, worship Him, adore Him, and to share the salvation He offers to others that is in Christ Jesus. The key to confidence before God is your heart.

## **I. We Come Confidently Before God with an Assured Heart (v19-21)**

Verse 19 starts with the words, "and by this we know." What is that phrase referring to? It is referring to verse 18 that describes a life characterized by love in both word and deed. If we would have an assured heart, we must do two things.

### **A. We Refuse a Condemning Heart (v19-20)**

The phrase "of the truth" is saying the same thing as the phrase "born of God" back in verse 9. John is saying that when we have a life characterized by supernatural, selfless, Holy Spirit generated love, we have evidence that we are born of God and therefore we are "of the truth." This issue of whether you are *of the truth* must be settled before you have a confident heart. Are you born of God and thus of the truth? You can know! Before you leave today I encourage you to get this settled. Don't go through another day in the turmoil of doubt.

The Greek word translated "condemns" in verse 20 means to incriminate or to blame. All of us have things in our past that we regret. There are no exceptions to that. If you have been born of God, all of those shame generating, regret causing sins, are cleansed by the blood of Christ. Even if the sin that shamed you was after salvation, to restore the intimacy with God, He tells you is to confess your sin. 1 John 1:9 was written primarily to believers. The word "confess" literally means to agree with God.

That agreeing with God involves turning from the sin, calling it what God calls it – sin, instead of trying to justify it, then in an attitude of repentance, to continue in your walk with God. However, don't ever forget, whatever your sin that 1 John 1:7b (NKJV) is true. "...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses [present tense – is cleansing] us from all sin."

Here is how our enemy works. Satan is called - "the accuser of the brethren" in Revelation 12:10. He uses our mind and our conscience – our heart – to accuse us, to incriminate us before God and condemn us. When you come before God to pray, is there something in your past that comes up and makes you feel condemned and you find that you can't pray? What verse 20 is speaking of is those who are "of the truth," those who are "born of God." The issue is a sin or sins that have genuinely been repented of but there is still a feeling of being condemned by your heart and have no confidence before God.

Let's look closely at verses 19-20 together. If you examine the pattern of your life and that pattern is one of supernatural unexplainable love to those in need (3:17-18), if the pattern of your life is that hatred for another cannot settle down and make itself at home in your heart (3:15), if there is an intolerance of sin so that sin is not the pattern of our life (3:9), if as a pattern of life you love the Father and His values, not the world system and its values and ways (2:15), if you love God's Word and His commandments and desire to keep them (2:3-5) and if you cannot tolerate sin, but must repent and confess it (1:6-9), then you have evidence that you are "of the truth." If you are of the truth, you have the birthright to have an assured (literally "persuaded") heart.

If you are *of the truth*, then you must choose to not listen to or put any credence in your condemning heart. Why? It is because God and His Word are greater than your heart. If God through His Word has declared you righteous in Christ, then you are righteous! Romans 8:1a (NKJV) "*There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...*"

Listen carefully, when you have been forgiven and you slink away from the presence of God because your heart condemns you, you are dishonoring Christ and treating His shed blood as an insufficient remedy for your sin! You have devalued the cross and dishonored the One who gave Himself for you. Some people say, "Let your conscience be your guide." Others say "follow your heart." Both are wrong. Let the Word of God be your guide and choose to believe the Word of God, not your guilty feeling conscience or your own mind filled with memories of past failures. 1 John 1:7b (NKJV) "...the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." Don't dishonor Christ by allowing your own heart to condemn you when He has cleansed you and completely forgiven you.

If we would come before God with an assured heart, we must refuse a condemning heart.

## **B. We Rejoice in a Confident Heart (v21)**

Verse 21 stands in stark contrast to verse 20. When we entrust the condition of our heart to God and His Word, we have confidence toward God. The word "confidence" means boldness and freedom of speech. It pictures the confidence of a child in approaching his father who loves him and desires to spend time with him. When you come into God's presence in prayer and worship, do you come with confidence, with freedom of speech in His presence? That is the birthright of every child of God. When we come before the Father claiming our identity in Christ that is clearly spelled out in Scripture, we come with the confidence and boldness of a son as he stands before His loving father and not an accused criminal standing before a judge.

## **II. We Continue Confident before God with Answered Prayer (v22)**

What is at stake here when it comes to having confidence before God? It is primarily answered prayer. Answered prayer ought to be the norm in your life. Before George Mueller died in 1898 he humbly said that the Lord had answered 50,000 prayer requests and 30,000 of these were the same hour in which they were asked. If you have a heart that is condemning you, you will not have confidence in His presence that He will answer your prayer.

I believe there are three reasons most believers have such pathetic prayer lives.

First, there is a pride problem. We really think we can take care of things by ourselves. We worry and fret and scheme but don't seriously pray because we are filled with pride. Humble people pray and proud people do not pray. James 4:2b (NKJV) "...you do not have because you do not ask."

Second, we don't pray because we are often lazy. Real prayer, effective prayer is hard work. It involves spiritual warfare, painful examination of our lives and the humbling of ourselves. Sometimes we may be called to fast along with prayer and to keep praying and believing that God will answer.

Third, I believe that the main reason most don't pray is because they are not living obedient lives and their unconfessed sin stands as a barrier between them and God. We will see amazing answers to prayer, like Mueller, when we keep God's commandments and do those things pleasing in His sight.

Keeping His commandments (obedience) is not the cause for God answering prayer; it is the condition. In other words, our obedience doesn't earn God's answer of our prayers or obligate God to answer our prayers. It removes the barriers to God answering prayers. Psalms 66:18 (ESV) "If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened." When we have a lifestyle of obedience, it is not only evidence that we know Him (1 John 2:3-5), it removes the barrier of sin in our heart that causes God to choose not to answer our prayers.

I don't believe verse 22 is giving us two things we must do to see a life of answered prayer. The second part of the verse shows us the attitude in which we obey His commandments. We obey His commands because we desire to bring Him pleasure. The thing that separates God pleasing obedience from legalism is when our obedience to His commands is motivated by love.

### ***III. We Are Confident before God when Abide in His Presence (v23-24)***

#### **A. We Believe on the Son (v23a)**

This faith that saves us never dies; it just grows stronger. We believe on Jesus to give us wisdom, supply for our needs, and give us power over the enemy. To believe on His name is to believe on all that He is. He is Savior, Lord, and life. A mark of genuine faith is that it keeps growing deeper and stronger over time.

#### **B. We Love One Another (v23b)**

What we believe affects who we love. We love the Lord Jesus and we love those He loves. Believing in the Son and loving others go together. This part of verse 23 takes us back to 1 John 3:17-18 (NKJV) "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him? My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth."

#### **C. We Abide in Him and His Spirit Abides in Us (v24)**

We have looked at this key word "abide" before. It means to remain in, to stay. It speaks of a constant conscious awareness that Christ dwells in us in the person of His Spirit. As we allow the Spirit to fill us and we look to Him for the wisdom and power to do all that is commanded of us. One of the reformers used the Latin phrase *Coram Deo* as his motto. That means "in the presence of God." Abiding in Him is living life "in His presence" and relating everything that happens to Him and to His will and His supply.

### **Conclusion**

Here is the solution to that condemning heart. There is a higher court than a person's own heart. Notice the words in verse 21 – "God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." If God in His Word says that you are right with Him, this is a greater, more authoritative word than your accusing heart. The question then comes, "But how do I know that I really meant it when I believed in Him?" The genuineness of your salvation is not in being able to remember all the details or even remembering the time of your conversion to Christ. The genuineness of your salvation is in the

evidence of your pattern of life. Do you hate sin and are compelled to turn from it and confess it to God? Do you love His word and keep it as a pattern of life? Do you love the Father more than the world and its values? Do you desire fellowship with other believers and love God's church (Christ's bride)? Do you find it impossible to continue in hate toward others? These (plus several more) are the evidence that what you have is real.